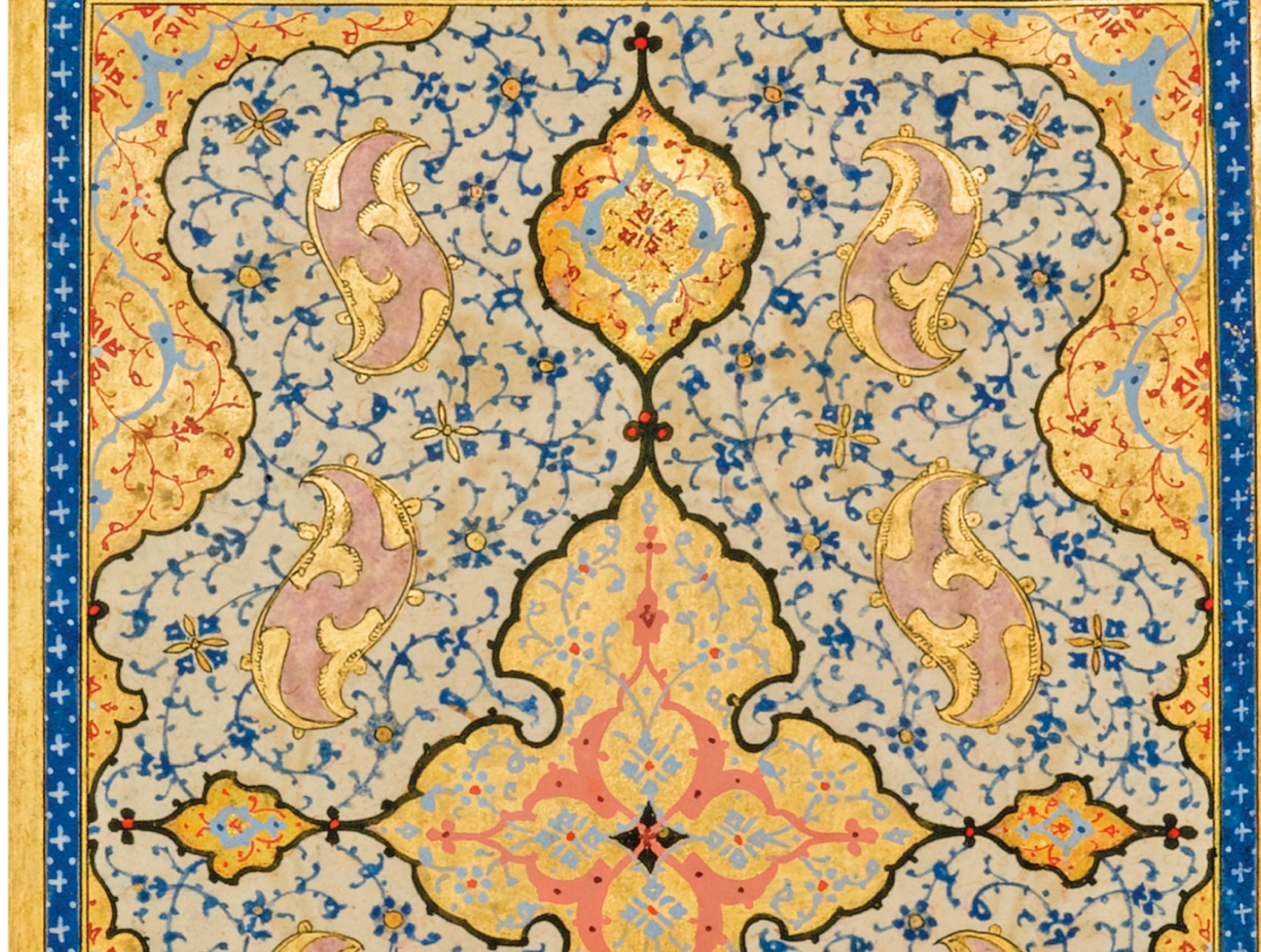




Al Fiqh al Akbar:
An Accurate Translation



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AL FIQH AL AKBAR: AN ACCURATE TRANSLATION

The treatise Al-Fiqh al-Akbar (The Greater Knowledge) has for centuries been accepted as a reliable work on Islamic beliefs. As one of the earliest works written on the subject and as one of the surviving works of the Great Imam of jurisprudence and theology, Abu Hanifa Nu'man ibn Thabit al-Kufi (d. 150/1767), the text has been widely studied around the Muslim world for centuries.





SECTION 1

MAIN SOURCES OF THIS WORK

- This work extensively relies on the following two works, *“Al Fiqh al Akbar Explained”* by Shaykh Abdur Rahman Ibn Yusuf, it is an excellent translation and tafsir of al Fiqh al Akbar with commentaries on it from prominent scholars such as Abul Muntha al Maghnisawi, Imam Ali al Qari and Imam Abu Hanifa’s Kitab al Wistiya, the work also goes into the history of Aqeedah and the major sects that emerged which al Fiqh al Akbar was written to combat. The other work used is *“Abu Hanifa, Salafis, al-Fiqh al-Akbar and The Truth”* By Abdullah bin Hamid Ali, we have not used quotation marks in most cases to avoid their excessive use although slight editing was done to certain paragraphs to clarify ideas, this work was also written and compiled feesabilillah.

The Need for an Accurate Translation

Bismillahi Rahmani Raheem

Modern translations of Imam Abu Hanifa’s al Fiqh al Akbar have attributed anthropomorphic (claiming Allah has a form or body) views to the Imam, Salafi’s have claimed such beliefs regarding the Imam despite the fact his most famous work on Aqeedah was written to refute the heretical sects that arose in his time claiming the Anthramorphism of Allah, and to clearly define the Aqeedah of Ahl al Sunnah wal Jama’ah, this claim is made because it would align the Imam who was of the salaf (first generations of muslims) with their own Aqeedah Wasitiyyah and al-Aqeeda al-Hamawiyya both written by Ibn Taymiya and recently revived and published.

“Salafis make such claims since it gives credence to their arguments about the literalism of the Attributes of Allah,’ like the hand, face, eyes, foot, side, shin, self, etc. They could easily make the claim that their ‘aqeedah is correct and in agreement with the creed of the Salaf, since Imam Abu Hanifa who is one of the Salaf says in Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar that Allah has a hand. And His hand is an attribute, similar to what they say”.

Salafis also argue that Imam Abu al-Hasan Al-Ash’ari’s Kitab al-Ibaanah ‘an Usool ad-Diyaanah (containing Anthropomorphic views) that has been attributed to him, is a proper ascription” even though it has been rejected by the classical scholars for hundreds of years.

“In that book, it states that Imam Abu Hanifa believed that the Qur’an was created, But if Salafis accept that Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar is appropriately ascribed to Imam Abu Hanifa, they have to also accept his words that contradict this claim when he says”:

“The Qur’an is Allah’s word, High is He, in pages transcribed, in hearts protected, on tongues recited, and on the Prophet (PBUH) and His family revealed. Our utterance of the Qur’an is created. Our writing of it is created. Our recitation of it is created. And the Qur’an is uncreated.”

“The Imam expressly states in his own work Al-Fiqh al-Akbar that the “Qur’an is uncreated”, but the Salafis claim that the narrations in Imam al Ashari’s Al-Ibaanah that state Imam Abu Hanifa believed that it was created is a proper ascription to Imam al Ashari”.

“Imam Abu al-Hasan doesn’t make any mention of Abu Hanifa as being one of those who believed that the Qur’an was created in his more prominent and well-established work entitled ‘Maqaalaat al-Islaamiyyeen’. Either Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar is Abu Hanifa’s work, which would make Kitaab al-Ibaanah – in its present form - not Abu al-Hasan’s work. Or the current Kitaab al-Ibaanah is Abu al-Hasan’s work, which would mean that Al-Fiqh al-Akbar is not Abu Hanifa’s work”.

The matter can’t be both ways, but rather as the scholars have maintained for hundreds of years al Ibanna is an incorrect ascription to Imam Abu Hassan al Ashari. The significance of all this is due to the modern anthropomorphic trend among salafi groups that go to the extent of saying Allah is limited by the bounds of his creation and begin to use the Aqeedah of the christians to explain their views.

This trend arose from the works of Ibn Taymiya, but looking into his life we have to wonder and ask what did Ibn Taymiya himself believe and how did it lead to the situation we are in today?

Ibn Taymiya is Ahmad ibn Abd al-Salaam ibn Abdullah, Abu al-Abbas Taqi al-Din ibn Taymiya al-Harrani, born in Harran, east of Damascus, in 661/1263. A famous Hanbali scholar in Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir), hadith and jurisprudence, Ibn Taymiya was a voracious reader and author of great personal courage who was endowed with a compelling writing style and a keen memory.

He was largely self taught, he was a student of Ibn `Abd al-Da'im, al-Qasim al-Irbili, Ibn `Allan and Ibn Abi `Amr al-Fakhr, Ibn Taymiyya mostly read by himself until he achieved a great amount of learning, inspite of this achievement, the manner of

learning the Deen are specific in our Ummah and because of this un-Orthodox manner Shaykh al-Islam, al-Hafiz al-Taqi al-Subki said regarding Ibn Taymiyah: "He memorized a lot and did not discipline himself with a shaykh."

Because of this he made many mistakes in what he said, traditionally the correct tafsir of a work is passed on from teacher to student otherwise we risk inserting our own ideas and bias not in line with the author of the text and its teachings, if a scholar authors a work he sets the Tafsir for the work, for which Ijazah (Lit. permission) is given to teach it, but when He learns a work of others He needs to gain that Ijazah from other scholars for the work he is learning, this is the essence of the Ijazah system our scholars used for 1400 years all over the world and what Ijazah is, the teacher giving the student permission to teach a text because they can guaranty the student understood the text as it was intended to be understood, hence preserving and protecting the Deen. Ijazah-Permission comes with a chain of people who a text and its tafsir has come through, which goes back to the author of the work and there are many types of Ijazah. This chain is very similar to the sanad (chain) system we have in place for Ahadith and is the way by which we grade the strength of the hadith and protect the sunnah from fabrications.

Among his students were scholars such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Imam al-Dhahabi, Imam Ibn Kathir, and Yusuf ibn `Abd al-Hadi. Because he was largely self taught and did not take in all matters from the tafsir of those who came before him, his opinions and manner created intense controversy both in his life and after his death, to the point that scholars were divided into those who loved him and those who did not. An illustration of this is the fact that the Shafi'i hadith master al-Mizzi did not call anyone else Shaykh al-Islam in his time besides Ibn Taymiyya; yet the Hanafi scholar `Ala' al-Din al-Bukhari issued a fatwa whereby anyone who called Ibn Taymiyya Shaykh al-Islam committed disbelief [1Cf. Hajji Khalifa, Kashf al-Zunun (1:838).]

His first clash with the scholars occurred in 698 in Damascus when he was temporarily barred from teaching after he issued his Fatwa Hamawiyya. In this epistle he unambiguously attributes literal upward direction to Allah Almighty. He was refuted by his contemporary, the Imam and Mufti of Aleppo, then Damascus, Ibn Jahbal al-Kilabi (d. 733)

Ibn Taymiyya then returned to his activities until he was summoned by the authorities again in 705 to answer for his `Aqida Wasitiyya. He spent the few following years in and out of jail or defending himself from various "abhorrent charges" according to Ibn Hajar. Because he officially repented, his life was spared, although at one point it was officially announced in Damascus that "Whoever follows the beliefs of Ibn Taymiyya, his life and property are licit for seizure." These events instigated great

dissension among the scholars in Damascus and Cairo as detailed in Imam Taqi al-Din al-Husni's *Daf' Shubah Man Shabbaha wa Tamarrad wa Nasaba Dhalika ila al-Sayyid al-Jalil al-Imam Ahmad* ("Repelling the Sophistries of the Rebel who Likens Allah to Creation, Then Attributes This Doctrine to Imam Ahmad") [3Published in Cairo at Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1931.]

He was imprisoned during much of his life in Cairo, Alexandria, and Damascus for his writings, scholars of his time accusing him of believing Allah to be a corporeal entity because of what he mentioned in his *al-Aqida al-Hamawiyya* and *al-Wasitiyya* and other works.

Imam Ibn Hajar al Asqalani said, "People were divided into parties because of him, some considering him an anthropomorphist [*mujassim*] because of what he mentioned in *al-Aqeeda al-Hamawiyya* and *al-Aqeeda al-Waasitiyya* and other books of his, such as Allah's hand, foot, shin, and face being literal attributes of Allah (*Sifaatun Haqeeqiyyatun lillaah*) and that He is established upon the Throne with His Essence". It was said to him that were this the case He would necessarily be subject to spatial confinement (*al-taHayyuz*) and divisibility (*al-inqisaam*). He replied: "I do not concede that spatial confinement and divisibility are (necessarily) properties of bodies (objects don't have to have limits in shape or be divisible)," whereupon it was adduced against him (*ulzima*) that he held Allah's Essence to be subject to spatial confinement (since these are questions relating to objects and their properties, and irrespective of the none existence of limits and divisibility). (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani's biography on Ibn Taymiyya in *al-durar al-kaamina fi a'yaan al-mi'at al-thaamina* [The Hidden Pearls Concerning the Famous People of the Eighth Century] Hyderabad: Daa'irat al-ma'aarif al-'uthmaaniyya, 1384 H, vol. 1:144-160.)

His student al-Dhahabi praised him lavishly as "the brilliant shaykh, imam, erudite scholar, censor, jurist, mujtahid, and commentator of the Qur'an," but acknowledged that Ibn Taymiyya's disparaging manners alienated even his admirers. For example, the grammarian Abu Hayyan praised Ibn Taymiyya until he found out that he believed himself a greater expert in the Arabic language than Sibawayh, whereupon he disassociated himself from his previous praise. Other former admirers turned critics were the qadi al-Zamalkani and al-Dhahabi himself, in whose *al-Nasiha al-Dhahabiyya* he addresses Ibn Taymiyya with the words: "When will you stop criticizing the scholars and finding fault with the people?" something he acknowledged he was at fault with and sincerely repented from in his last days while in prison.

Imam Ibn Hajar al Al-Haytami wrote in his Fatawa Hadithiyya: Ibn Taymiyya is a servant which Allah forsook, misguided, blinded, deafened, and debased. That is the declaration of the imams who have exposed the corruption of his positions and the mendacity of his sayings. Whoever wishes to pursue this must read the words of the Mujtahid Imam Abu al-Hasan (Taqi al-Din) al-Subki, of his son Taj al-Din Subki, of the Imam al-`Izz ibn Jama`a and others of the Shafi`i, Maliki, and Hanafi shaykhs... It must be considered that he is a misguided and misguiding innovator (mubtadi` dall mudill) and an ignorant who brought evil (jahilun ghalun) whom Allah treated with His justice. May He protect us from the likes of his path, doctrine, and actions!... Know that he has differed from people on questions about which Taj al-Din Ibn al-Subki and others warned us.

Among the things Ibn Taymiyya said which violated the scholarly consensus are:

1. that our Lord is subject to created events (mahallun li al-hawadith) - glorified, exalted, and sanctified is He far above what the depraved ascribe to Him!
2. that He is complex or made of parts (murakkab), His Entity standing in need similarly to the way the whole stands in need of the parts - elevated is He and sanctified above that!
3. that the Qur'an is created in Allah's Entity (muhdath fi dhatillah) - elevated is He above that!
4. that the world is of a pre-eternal nature and exists with Allah since pre-eternity as an "ever-abiding created object" (makhluqan da'iman), thus making it necessarily existent in His Entity (mujaban bi al-dhat) and not acting deliberately (la fa`ilan bi al-ikhtyar) - elevated is He above that! [This is mentioned about Ibn Taymiyya by Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bari (1959 ed. 13:411). This doctrine was refuted by Muhammad ibn Isma`il al-San`ani in his Risala Sharifa fi ma Yata`allaqu bi Kam al-Baqi Min `Umr al-Dunya? (Precious Treatise Concerning the Remaining Age of the World") ed. al-Wasabi al-Mathani. (San`a': Maktaba Dar al-Quds, 1992).]
5. his suggestions of Allah's corporeality, direction, displacement, (al-jismiyya wa al-jiha wa al-intiqal), and that He fits the size of the Throne, being neither bigger nor smaller - exalted is He from such a hideous invention and wide-open disbelief.
6. his saying that the fire shall go out (al-nar tafni), [This doctrine was refuted by Muhammad ibn Isma`il al-San`ani in his Raf` al-Astar li-Ibtal Adilla al-Qa'ilin bi-Fana al-Nar ("Exposing the Nullity of the Proofs of Those Who Claim That the Fire Shall Pass Away"), ed. Albani (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1984).]

7. that the Prophet, Allah bless and greet him, has no special status before Allah (la jaha lahu) and must not be used as a means (la yutawassalu bihi), [This is explicitly contradicted by the vast majority of scholars, including Ibn Taymiyya's own students Ibn al-Qayyim (cf. al-Nuniyya, section on tawassul) and al-Dhahabi, as well as al-Shawkani and countless others.]

8. He cited the tradition of Allah's descent (to the nearest heaven), then climbed down two steps from the minbar and said regarding Allah's descent: "Just like this descent of mine" and he was categorized as an anthropomorphist (wa nusiba ila al-tajseem).

Najm al-Din Sulayman (al-Hanbali) said: "He used to bring up in one hour from the Book and the Sunna and language and speculation (a quantity of material) which no-one could bring up in many sessions, as if these sciences were before his very eyes and he was picking and choosing from them at will. A time came when his companions took to over-praising him and this drove him to be satisfied with himself until he became proud before his fellow human beings, and became convinced that he was a scholar capable of independent reasoning (istash'ara annahu mujtahidun). Henceforth he began to answer each and every scholar great and small, past and recent, until he went all the way back to `Umar and faulted him in some matter. This reached the ears of the Shaykh Ibraaheem al-Raqiyy who reprimanded him. Ibn Taymiyya went to see him, apologized, and asked for forgiveness. (Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalani's biography on Ibn Taymiyya in al-durar al-kaamina fi a`yaan al-mi'at al-thaamina [The Hidden Pearls Concerning the Famous People of the Eighth Century] Hyderabad: Daa'irat al-ma'aarif al-`uthmaaniyya, 1384 H, vol. 1:144-160.)

It was the Mujtahid Imam Shaykh al-Islam Taqi al-Din al-Subki (D. 756AH) who unraveled the mystery behind the doctrine (Aqeedah) of Ibn Taymiya and his followers, that they being from the Hashwiyya sect, they were a minority fringe group who would teach their beliefs in secret.

Shaykhul al-Islam Taqi al-Din al-Subki said "As for the Hashwiyya (who emerged in the early days of Islam), they are a despicable and ignorant lot who claim to belong to the school of (Imam) Ahmad (ibn Hanbal)... They have corrupted the creed of a few isolated Shafi'is, especially some of the Hadith scholars among them who are lacking in reason... They were held in utmost contempt, and then towards the end of the seventh century (AH) a man (Ibn Taymiya) appeared who was diligent, intelligent and well-read and did not find a Shaykh to guide him, and he is of their creed and is brazen and dedicated to teaching his ideas... He said that non-eternal attributes can subsist in Allah, and that Allah is ever-acting, and that an infinite chain of events is not impossible either in the past or the future. He split the ranks and cast doubts on the creed of the

Muslims and incited dissension amongst them. He did not confine himself to creedal matters of theology, but transgressed the bounds and said that travelling to visit the tomb of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) is a sin... The scholars agreed to imprison him for a long time, and the Sultan imprisoned him... and he died in prison. Then some of his followers started to promulgate his ideas and teach them to people in secret while keeping quiet in public, and great harm came from this." [al-Zabidi, Ithaf al-Sada al-Muttaqin, 2:11. al-Zabidi is quoting from al-Subki's al-Sayf al-Saqil fi al-Radd 'ala ibn Zafil, see al-Rasa-il al-Subkiyya, 84-85]

Ibn `Asakir states in Tabyin Kadhib al-Muftari (p. 150-151): "The Hashwiyya and Mujassima said that Allah is materialized (hallun) over the Throne, that the Throne is His place, and that He sits on it.. . . The Mushabbiha and Hashwiyya said: Descent is the descent of His person (dhat) together with movement (haraka) and displacement (intiqaal), and istiwa' is [His] sitting on the Throne and indwelling on top of it."

What persisted after Ibn Taymiyah's death of his teachings and the later revived was not his final beliefs in life as He repented of all his Hashwiyya beliefs and adopted the Aqeedah of Ahl al Sunnah wal Jama'ah.

Imam Ibn Hajar al Asqalani wrote in al-Durar al-Kamina: An investigation [of his views] was conducted with several scholars [in Cairo] and a written statement was drawn in which he said: "I am Ash`ari." His handwriting is found with what he wrote verbatim, namely: "I believe that the Qur'an is a meaning which exists in Allah's Entity, and that it is an Attribute from the pre-eternal Attributes of His Entity, and that it is uncreated, and that it does not consist in the letter nor the voice, and that His saying: "The Merciful established Himself over the Throne" (20:4) is not taken according to its literal meaning (laysa `ala zahirihi), and I don't know in what consists its meaning, nay only Allah knows it, and one speaks of His 'descent' in the same way as one speaks of His 'establishment.'"

It was written by Ahmad ibn Taymiyya and they witnessed over him that he had repented of his own free will from all that contravened the above. This took place on the 25th of Rabi` al-Awwal 707 (d.728) and it was witnessed by a huge array of scholars and others.[The names of the scholars who counter-signed Ibn Taymiyya's deposition are listed by al-Kawthari in his notes to Ibn al-Subki's al-Sayf al-Saqil (p. 95-96).]

Imam Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari [Imam al Kawthari] stated in strong terms that Ibn Taymiyya's position on Allah's attributes is tantamount to disbelief and apostasy because it reduces Allah to a corporeal body (of a material nature; tangible),

Ibn Taymiyya repented of his views and declared himself to be Ash`ari, but his older works where still in circulation in various parts of the muslim world, these works where reprinted in our times even though Ibn Taymiya no longer held these beliefs.

Much has been said about the state of the Arabic publishing world and its lack of professionalism and ethics, “One familiar with the Arabic publishing world knows that editions of texts can vary considerably in their accuracy and quality” and at one point what may have been termed a publishing house was no more than a few typists and one researcher, “if they decided they needed to print a work of Fiqh or Tafsir, they would take the old reliable print, hand it over to their group of typists who in a few days would have it ready in a text document, complete with thousands of errors added free of charge. Of course, no re-checking, correction, etc... would take place”, anything they could make a profit from was used and no research into the status or history of a work was ever done, the legacy of those days along with the works they published and are being republished are still with us.

These heretical doctrines where later endorsed by Ibn Taymiyya's admirer Ibn Abi al-Izz al Hanafi (d.1390) in his commentary on the creed of Imam al-Tahawi, now in circulation, despite it being an Ashari Aqeedah based on Imam Abu Hanifa's al Fiqh al Akbar, this commentary has caused much confusion in modern times because of its anthropomorphist explanations in contradiction to Imam Ashari's and Imam Abu Hanifa's beliefs.

In modern times those who do not respect Ibn Taymiyahs beliefs or had not done a thorough research into his life and opinions before he died have reprinted his earlier works and adopted his rejected opinions, Imam Dhahabi, his student, says under the biography of Imam Abul Hasan al-'Ashari: "I saw some words from al-'Ashari which amazed me, and it's established, al-Bayhaqi narrated it, I heard Aba Hazim al-'Abdawi, I heard Zahir bin Ahmed as-Sarakhsi say, “when the time of death came close to Abi al-Hasan al-'Ashari in my house in Baghdad, he called me, so I went to him, then he said, “Be my witness that I don't do takfir of anyone from the people of Qibla, for everyone points (worships) towards one God, and all of this is differences in expression (all of the debates).” I (Imam ad-Dhahabi) said, “this is what I take (believe in), and likewise (is the case with) our Shaykh Ibn Taymiyya. In his last days he would say, “I don't do takfir of anyone from the Ummah, and he said, “The Prophet, peace be upon him said, “Only a mu'min is mindful of Wudu”, so whoever clings to the prayers with Wudu' is a Muslim.” (From his work Siyar A'lam al-Nubala)

The fact that Ibn Taymiyah let go of his old beliefs should not be a shock to people because this isn't the first time in our history a scholar has changed his entire belief system after increasing in knowledge. Imam Abu-l hassan al Ashari after whom

the Ashari Aqeedah is named was a Mutazili for the first 40 years of his life, after seeing the Messenger of Allah (saws) in a dream, in which He (saws) instructed him to leave them, He left then refuted them for the remainder of his life, He wrote about the Aqeedah of Ahl al Sunnah wal Jamaah which came to be known as the Ashari Aqeedah. Imam al Shafii (r.a) studied Fiqh, first in Makkah then he went to the Imam of Madinah and leader of Ahl al Hadith, Malik ibn Anas, and studied with him, then He went to Iraq where He taught, one of his students was Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, thereafter, Imam al Shafi'i travelled to Egypt. After leaving Iraq for Egypt and learning from the Ullumah there, He critically studied Imam Maliks positions, formulated his own views and left everything he previously believed. He came to the conclusion that the undertaking most deserving of his attention was the collection of Islamic legal principles, He let go of all his old beliefs that He held while in Madina and Iraq, and wrote the first book on Usul al Fiqh (Principles of Islamic Law) and Ijtihad, "al Risala".

In relation to this work and Imam al Shafii's achievements Imam Ibn Hajar recorded two Ahadith of the Prophet (saws) regarding him, the prophet (saws) said, "O Allah! Guide Quraysh, for the science of the scholar that comes from them will encompass the earth. O Allah! You have let the first of them taste bitterness, so let the latter of them taste reward.", The Imams work al Risala codified the science of Legal Jurisprudence, the science he first codified and proposed, became the foundation of all Law on earth and benefited the entire Ummah over its past 1400 year history. The second hadith of the Prophet (saws) regarding Imam al Shafii says: "Truly, Allah shall send forth for this Community, at the onset of every hundred years, someone who will renew their Religion for them." The scholars agreed, among them Abu Qilaba (d. 276) and Imam Ahmad (r.a), that the first narration regarding the science of Islam signified Imam al-Shafii, and this second narration signified Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (r.a) as the first person Allah sent for the Ummah in the first century and then Imam al-Shafii after him as the second person in the second century.

His student Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (r.a) retained much of his old methodology, but because the approach was literalist Imam al Shaffi understood it was not enough to explain the Deen and the Qruan, when Allah himself had said in the Qur'an: "We have explained in detail in this Qur'an, for the benefit of mankind, *every kind of similitude*: but man is, in most things, contentious (18:54)

The word similitude has the following meanings: an imaginative comparison, a simile ,a counterpart, double, a visible likeness, a image, a correspondence in kind or quality or a point of comparison.

Meaning every story and lesson in the Qur'an is a similitude to be applied to what we experience in life, and not entirely literal in what is being taught, we have to delve into the Qur'an's Maqasid (objectives) to learn the Fiqh of the Shariah. Allah was teaching us lessons from these stories and to know them we have to use our reasoning and understand the essence of that lesson. These verses are why the prophet (saws) explicitly taught Ijtihad (Independent Reasoning) to his companions, Mu'adh ibn Jabal states that when the Prophet (saws) sent him to Yemen, he asked: "what will you do if a matter is referred to you for judgement?" Mu'adh said: "I will judge according to the Book of Allah." The Prophet asked: "what if you find no solution in the Book of Allah?" Mu'adh said: "Then I will judge by the Sunnah of the Prophet." The Prophet asked: "And what if you do not find it in the Sunnah of the Prophet?" Mu'adh said: "Then I will make Ijtihad to formulate my own judgement." The Prophet patted Mu'adh's chest and said "Praise be to Allah who has guided the messenger of His Prophet to that which pleases Him and His Prophet." (Abu Daud)

Independent Reasoning based on what is clear in the Quran and Sunnah is called Qiyas, Analogy, the scholar makes an analogy of the story or lesson and applies it to a similar situation in life, Ijtihad, Complete Independent Legal Reasoning, is when no likeness is found to a situation we are facing so the scholar has to study the Maqasid (Objectives) of the stories in the Qur'an and apply them through similarities he can identify in the situation he is facing, and this later type of reasoning is what the prophet (saws) taught Mu'adh (r.a) and this is the science that Imam al Shafii identified and codified the rules of in his book al Risala, but only after giving up his old beliefs.

Amir ibn Al-As reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, say, "If a judge makes a ruling, striving to apply his reasoning (ijtihad) and he is correct, then he will have two rewards; and if a judge makes a ruling, striving to apply his reasoning and he is mistaken, then he will have one reward." [Sahih Muslim, Book 18, Number 4261]

If we were to take the Qur'an only in literal terms then we would clearly fall short of what Allah (swt) himself intended for us, which is why the need for Ijtihad (Independent Legal Reasoning) was essential.

Allah said He taught man by the pen (96:4), but if there was no need for investigation and it was all literal, the Qur'an would be limited in its scope and what it applies to because not every kind of situation is mentioned literally in it, no books would have been needed to be written, man could not be taught by the pen as was His intent, and no scholar would have exercised their reasoning to connect the similitude's in the Qur'an to Life.

Allah also says he was comprehensive in the similitude's He has mentioned, "[O MEN!] We have now bestowed upon you from on high a divine writ containing all that you ought to bear in mind will you not, then, use your reason?"[Qur'an 21:10]

But man would need to use his reasoning to discover them and apply them to life correctly, "In time We shall make them fully understand Our messages [through what they perceive] in the utmost horizons [of the universe] and within themselves, so that it will become clear unto them that this [revelation] is indeed the truth. [Still,] is it not enough [for them to know] that thy Sustainer is witness unto everything?"[Qur'an 41:53]

"They know but the outer surface of this world's life, whereas of the ultimate things they are utterly unaware [The term al-akhirah circumscribes, in this context, both the inner reality of this world's life and the ultimate reality of the hereafter. (Asad)]."[Qur'an 30:7] this means we have to delve in to the meaning of things and apply this to the sciences and knowledge we discover to see the depth of Allah's knowledge in the Qur'an.

The Hanbali Madhab was literalist and almost did not exist after Imam Ahmad (r.a) but for his students who codified his methodology and applied the Usul (principles) of Fiqh that Imam Shafii wrote about in his work al Risala, almost out of love and admiration for him, He was known as a saintly man above his achievements in Fiqh.

But despite the use of Ijtihad excessive literalism remained among some of its scholars, it was this attitude that led those among the later generations to use this as an excuse for their beliefs to the point of understanding the attributes of Allah in the literal sense, which is still affecting the Ummah to this day.

Ibn Taymiya wrote Aqeedah Wasitiyyah and al-Aqeeda al-Hamawiyya both of which follow the teachings of the Hashawiya sect that he rejected towards the end of his life, it is regrettable and disastrous the teachings he no longer believes in are being revived today in his name and presented as his beliefs, The Mujtahid Imam, Shaykh al Islam al Subki who wrote about this was widely accepted as one of the Mujadid's (revivers) of the seventh century, like Imam al Shafii was accepted as the Mujadid of the second century, all madhhabs are in agreement on who Imam al Subki was, his words can't be dismissed on the basis of emotional arguments or taking sides because this was a matter of Sunni scholarship, it was a matter of what is or isn't part of the Aqeedah of Islam, or right vs wrong and not simply Ikhtilaf (difference of opinion), and as this was a matter of Aqeedah, it was something greater than the Madhabs of Fiqh and needed to be spoken about.

It is unfortunate that today rather than looking at these works for what they actually say and are, a (deliberate or un-deliberate) revival of the Hashwiyya Aqeedah, rather convoluted explanations are written to justify the obvious that is staring us in the Face. Every major scholar that lived in the time they were first said and written in understood them for what they were. “Laysa kamithlihi shay” (there is nothing Whatever like unto Him), there is nothing like him means literally there is nothing like him in every possible sense of the word and it refers to everything we can think of in creation, “fa bi ayyi alai rabbikuma tukaziban”, so which of Allah’s favours will you deny, these verses are comprehensive, all inclusive and all encompassing in what they refer to, this is why the verses regarding the hand and face etc are never taken literally, as soon as we say “we know how Allah is” then we have fallen short of what Allah himself said we won’t ever know in this life, and have contradicted the Qur'an in our claims.

سورة نبي اسرئيل

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى
 الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا
 إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ وَأَوْتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَ
 جَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ لَا يَخْذُوا مِنْ دُونِي وَكَيْلًا
 ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا وَضَعْنَاهُ
 فِي بَيْتِ إِسْرَءِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لِنُفْسِدَنَّهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَرِينًا
 وَلِنُعْلَنَ عَلُوًّا كَبِيرًا فَاذْجَبْنَاهُ وَعَدَاوَةً بَيْنَهُمَا بَعَثْنَا
 عَلَيْهِمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا خِلَالَ
 الدِّيَارِ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَفْعُولًا ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَوْثَرَ
 عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَا كَمَا كُنتُمْ
 نَفِيرًا إِنْ أَخْسَنْتُمْ إِخْسَنْتُمْ لَا نُفْسِدُكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ

ملها

فَلَهَا فَاذْجَبْنَا وَعْدًا لِأَخْرَجُ لِيَسْئُرُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَلِيَدْخُلُوا
 الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيُتَبَرَّكُوا مَا عَلِمُوا
 تَنْبِيرًا عَنِّي رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يَرْجِعَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدْتُمْ عَدَا
 وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ
 يَهْدِي لِلَّذِينَ هُمْ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ
 الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا وَأَنَا الَّذِينَ لَا
 يُوْءُ مَنُونٍ بِالْآخِرَةِ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَيَدْعُ
 الْإِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَاءَهُ بِالْخَيْرِ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ
 عَجُولًا وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَاتَيْنِ فَمَنْ جَاءَ آيَةَ
 اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِيَسْتَعْرِضُوا فَضْلًا
 مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلُّكُمْ أَعْدَادُ السَّاعِينَ وَالْحِسَابِ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ
 فَضْلُنَا مَقْصُودًا وَكُلُّ إِنْسَانٍ لَنَا رِزْقًا طَائِرُهُ فِي
 عُنُقِهِ وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مِنْشُورًا
 أَوْفِرْ كِتَابَكَ كَفَى بِنُفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ

SECTION 2

THE COMMAND TO USE OUR REASON

- There are almost 750 verses in the Qur'an encouraging people to contemplate what Allah created.
- "Say: "Roam the earth and observe how the creation was initiated." (29:20)
- "behold, there are messages indeed for people who think!" (30:21)
- "behold, there are messages indeed for all who are possessed of [innate] knowledge!" (30:22)
- "behold, there are messages indeed for people who [are willing to] listen!" (30:23)
- "behold, there are messages indeed for people who use their reason!" (30:24)
- "are they the same - those who know and those who do not know?" (39:9)

Al Fiqh al Akbar: An Accurate Translation

The treatise *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar* (The Greater Knowledge) has for centuries been accepted as a reliable work on Islamic beliefs. As one of the earliest works written on the subject and as one of the surviving works of the Great Imam of jurisprudence and theology, Abu Hanifa Nu'man ibn Thabit al-Kufi (d. 150/1767), the text has been widely studied around the Muslim world for centuries. A number of commentaries have been written on this concise work by renowned scholars of Islam such as Mulla 'Ali al-Qari and Abu 'l-Muntaha al-Maghnisawi, and it is quoted and referred to frequently in the works of scholars. One can quickly grasp the breadth of Imam Abu Hanifa's understanding of Islamic beliefs from a statement made by the esteemed Egyptian jurist and theologian, Imam Abu Jafar al-Tahawi at the beginning of his universally recognized treatise, *Al-'Aqida* ("Commonly known as *al-Aqeedah at Tahawiya*) This is an exposition of the beliefs of the *Ahl al-Sunna wa 'l-Jama'a* according to the jurists of the Muslim umma (community), Abu Hanifa, Abu Yusuf, and Muhammad (may Allah have mercy on them)."

The suitability of this work's title, *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, is noteworthy. *Fiqh* means "understanding," "knowledge," or "intelligence." The knowledge and understanding of a particular subject is also called *fiqh*, as in *Fiqh al-lugha*, "the science of language." The term *fiqh* by itself is commonly used by scholars of Islam to refer to "jurisprudence" or "the science of the law." The title of this text-*Al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, roughly translated as "The Greater Intelligence, Understanding, or Insight"- points to the noble subjects addressed in this book, which are divine oneness (*tawhid*) in particular and Islamic doctrine (*Aqida*) in general. Because of the sublime aim of

Aqida over all other subjects to gain insight about the Creator of the universe and to discover what one owes to Allah and what one receives from Him it seems most appropriate to translate the title of this book as "The Greater Science" or "The Greater Knowledge," which is very likely the reason for the author's choice of title.

‘Ilm al-tawhid, the science of divine oneness, is one of the most important and noble sciences. Not only does it refine one's understanding of the Creator, His messengers, and His communication with creation, but it also enables one to gain insight into the reality and purpose of this world and into the eschatological matters of the Hereafter. These are in fact the three major themes of any work on Islamic beliefs: (1) the divine being and attributes (ildhiyydt), (2) the functions of prophethood (nubuwwat), and (3) eschatology and that which comes after death (mughayyabat).

The earlier generations had little need for a codified form of theology. Most of the time, Surat al-Ikhlās would suffice. Moreover, during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger, in particular, whenever a question of faith or belief arose, he was there to answer it. There was no need then to formally systematize Aqida, just as there was no need to do so for fiqh, tafsir, and other religious sciences. Nearly the same was the condition of the era of the Companions and that of the Followers, the blessed period known as that of the pious predecessors (salaf salihin). Nevertheless, although Islamic belief and practice were for the most part unshakable during this period, faint tremors ominously signaled the quake that would soon rumble, then rock, the umma. Seeing the danger posed to sacred Islamic knowledge by deviant individuals, ambitious politicians, and an increasingly troubled populace, scholars from each successive generation, in response to the exigencies of their respective times, compiled and systematized Islamic norms, ideas, and beliefs, and meticulously crafted the disciplines we recognize today.

The origin of rigorous theological study can be traced back to as early as the caliphate of Uthman (r.a). During his time, various alien ideas took root, with varying durability, in Muslim society and found an eager audience. During the 'Abbasid period, starting around the middle of the second century AH, the introduction of Hellenistic philosophy into Lands Islam had spread to led to heated discord. The newly formed Mutazila sect managed to attain great favor with the ruling class, winning several caliphs over to their beliefs. They used their powerful political purchase to question and reinterpret many fundamentals of Islam and force conformity to their beliefs, or at least cow any would-be dissenters into silence. Those who had the courage to object were mercilessly persecuted, most notably Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (may Allah have mercy on him), who was cruelly put to the lash for refusing to accept false doctrines concerning the Qur'an. It was out of this turbulent setting that the orthodox theological schools of Abu 'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi emerged to answer the questions posed by these deviant sects.

Many of the differences one finds in Islamic doctrine and scholastic theology (kalam) literature are primarily between the Ash'aris and Maturidis and the Mu'tazila and, on a lesser scale, the Khawarij, Jabriyya, Murji'a, and a few other groups. The differences that some point to between the Ash'aris and the Maturidis are not theologically significant and have clear historical reasons, which we shall touch on below. It is more appropriate to view them as two approaches to the same theology and treat them as one. Indeed, the scholars do just that, referring to both groups collectively as Ash'aris. Both groups have always been mutually tolerant and never labelled the other innovative or heretical. It is only when their doctrine is set against the Mu'tazili and other doctrines that we see major theological divergence because we are touching upon the technical aspects of theology not relevant to the everyday beliefs of the layman. An exhaustive study of each of these groups, and of others, and the effects their interplay had on Muslim government and society has been charted in the venerable tomes of history and theology. It is far beyond our purpose here to give even a synopsis of these works, but to gain a proper context in which to place Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, it is fitting to give a brief overview of the major theological groups whose origins date back to the author Imam Abu Hanifa's time.

The Asharis

The eponymous (a people named after a particular person) founder of the Ash'ari school was the "Imam of the Theologians," Ali ibn Isma'il ibn Abi Bishr al-Ash'ari al-Yamani al-Basri. A descendant of the famous Companion Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, he was born in Basra in the year 260/873 and died in 324/935. Imam Ash'ari was born at a time when several bickering sects were busying themselves with leveling charges of heresy and unbelief at other Muslims. Of these, the Mu'tazila emerged as the strongest by far and earned the most adherents, especially once they started to garner support from the caliphate.

Abu 'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari himself began as a Mu'tazili. Growing up as the step-son and student of the famous Mu'tazili teacher Abu 'Ali al-Jubba'i (d. 303/915), he became firmly grounded in their ideology and proficient in their methods of argumentation. He was a skilled debater to boot. All these qualities made him the ideal candidate to be the Mu'tazilis' star scholar, a post he held for many years. However, at the age of forty, he shocked all by severing himself from them and publicly renounced their beliefs. He then set out to defend the true beliefs the Ahl al-Sunna wa 'l-Jama'a held by the great jurists and Hadith scholars of the time.

How Imam al Ash'ari Left the Mu'tazilah to Join Ahl al-Sunnah:

Imam al-Ash'ari says: During the first ten days of one Ramadan, I saw Rasul Allah (saws). He said: "O 'Ali, aid the madh'habs that are veritably reported by me (Those who follow my Sunnah), because only that is the Truth." I woke up and was perplexed about this grave matter. I was immensely worried about this because I had numerous proofs opposing the 'reported' belief.

Within the next ten days, I saw him again. "What did you do about that which I ordered you to do?" I said: "Ya Rasul Allah, I tried to do it but I have many strong proofs [and arguments] against those beliefs which are reported from you. Therefore, I follow that which has stronger proofs concerning [the Attributes] of Allāh ta'ala" He said: "Aid the madh'habs that are reported from me, because that is the truth"

I woke up and I was terribly saddened. I then forsook Kalam [theology] and began following the Hadith and reciting the Qur'an.

In Basrah we have a custom that reciters (qurra'a) assemble together on the twenty seventh night of Ramadan and finish the entire Qur'an in that night. But I was feeling very sleepy and I couldn't stay back any longer. So I went home and slept, feeling very sorry at the great loss of missing that night's khatm.

I saw Rasul Allah (saws) "What did you do about that which I told you?" I replied: "I have forsaken Kalam and taken a firm hold of the Book of Allah and your sunnah." He said: "I did not tell you to forsake Kalam. I told you to aid the madh'habs that are reported from me, because that is the truth."

I said: "Ya Rasul Allah, how can I shun those ideas which I have helped in strengthening myself and aided its cause for the past thirty years, on the basis of a dream?"

He said: "If I did not know that Allah will aid you [in this], I would not have come here to explain all this. Do not make light of this dream in which I have come. Is that in which I saw Gibrīl, just another dream? I will not come again to you. Do well and Allah will aid you."

I woke up and said to myself: only falsehood remains after truth has been manifest. So I began to advocate Hadith about seeing Allah, intercession etc. And I have found proofs – by Allah - which I have never heard before, nor read in a book. This, I have realized to be the aid from Allah, the good news of which was given to me by Rasul Allah (saws).

[Extracted from Ibn 'Asakir's: Tabyin Kadhib al-Muftari fima Nusiba ila al-Imam Abu'l Hasan al- Ash'ari [Exposing the maligner's lies, in those things falsely attributed to Imam Abu'l Hasan al- Ash'ari], pgs 51-52.]

Much has been related regarding Imam Ash'ari's conversion to orthodoxy. The great Hadith master and historian Ibn 'Asakir relates from Isma'il ibn Abi Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Ash'ari (may Allah have mercy on him):

Ash'ari was our shaykh and imam, the one in whom we placed our reliance. He persisted on the ideology of the Mu'tazila for forty years. Then he isolated himself in his house for fifteen days. When he came out, he went to the Grand Masjid, ascended the pulpit, and said, "O people, I retreated from you for this period because, in my study of the evidences [of certain theological matters], they seemed to me to be on par with each other, and the truth over the false or the false over the truth was not discernible to me. I thus sought guidance from Allah, Most Blessed, Most High, and He guided me to the beliefs that I have recorded in this book of mine. I am now divested of all that I believed, just as I am divested of this garment of mine." He took off the garment he was wearing and cast it aside, and he passed the books on to the people. Among them were Al-Luma' (The Sparks). He then said, "Hence forth, I shall endeavor to refute the doctrines of the Mu'tazila and lay bare their mistakes and weaknesses." When the scholars of Hadith and jurisprudence read these books, they adopted their contents and embraced them wholeheartedly, so much that their school of thought came to be attributed to him.

Another incident, related by Qari, Taftazani, and others, may have also contributed to his conversion. They relate that Shaykh Abu 'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari once asked his teacher Abu 'Ali al-Jubba'i, "What is your opinion regarding three brothers, one of whom dies obedient, another disobedient, and the third as a child?" He replied, "The first will be rewarded, the second punished with Hellfire, and the third will neither be punished nor rewarded." Ash'ari asked, "If the third one says, 'O Lord, why did you give me death at a young age and not leave me to grow up so I could be obedient to you and thus enter Paradise?'" Jubba'i replied that Allah would say, "I knew that if you had grown up you would have disobeyed and thus entered the Hellfire, so it was better for you to have died young." Ash'ari said, "If the second one says, 'My Lord, why did you not let me [too] die young so I would not have disobeyed and entered Hellfire?' What will the Lord say then?" Jubba'i was

confounded. Ash'ari abandoned the Mu'tazila doctrine and took to refuting it and establishing what had been transmitted from the sunna and confirmed by the jamaa, or the community, of Companions and pious predecessors.

Therefore, he and his followers were called Ahl al-Sunna wa 'l-Jama'a or "the People of the Sunna and the Community" (Minah al-Rawd al-Azhar 220, Sharh al-Aqa'id al-Nasafiyya).

Imam al Ashari was also a descendant of the companion Abu Musa al Ashari (r.a) and both were from the people of Yemen. Upon accepting Islam Rasul Allah sent Abu Musa (r.a) him and his companions to Yemen and instructed him to guide the People there and teach them Islam. He returned from Yemen ten years later, Abu Musa did not come alone, He came with more than fifty persons from the Yemen all of whom had accepted Islam. Among them were his two brothers, Abu Ruhm and Abu Burdah. The Prophet referred to the whole group as the "Asharis". In fact he sometimes referred to all Yemenis as Asharis after Abu Musa al-Ashari. He often praised the group for their soft and tender-hearted nature and held them up to the rest of his companions as a high example of good behavior.

Umar, may God be pleased with him, often summoned Abu Musa and asked him to recite from the Book of God, saying: "Create in us a yearning for our Lord, O Abu Musa." As a mark of his dedication to the Qur'an, Abu Musa was one of the few companions who had prepared a mushaf a written collection of the revelations.

The Ashari Aqeedah is one of the Two major Aqeedah's adopted by the Ummah in Islam's history, in the Hadith of Jibril recorded by both Imam Bukhari and Muslim, the topic of Aqeedah comes under Iman while Fiqh comes under Islam.

Considering that the Prophet (saws) referred to himself as a Yemeni and the Dua He (saws) made for the people of Yemen regarding Iman, we can understand how a descendant of Abu Musa al Ashari would be the founder of one of Islam's major Madhabs on Aqeedah.

He (saws) said:

1. Imam al-Bukhari relates from Abu Mas'ud that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) gestured with his hands towards Yemen and said: "Belief (iman) is there...." (Sahih al-Bukhari, no: 4126 & Sahih Muslim, no: 81)
2. Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) said: "The people of Yemen have come to you and they are extremely gentle and soft-hearted. Belief (iman) is that of the Yemenis and wisdom (hikma) is that of the Yemenis. Pride and haughtiness are the characters of the owners of camels, and calmness and solemnity are the qualities of the owners of sheep." (Sahih al-Bukhari, no: 4127)
3. Sayyiduna Zayd ibn Thabit (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) looked towards Yemen and said: "O Allah! Turn their hearts (towards Iman)..." (Sunan Tirmidhi, no: 3934)
4. Sayyiduna Jubayr ibn Mut'im (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that once the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) looked up towards the heavens and said: "The people of Yemen have come to you like the pieces of clouds. They are the best of people on the face of the earth." A Companion asked: "O Messenger of Allah! Are they even better than us?" The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) replied: "Except you." (Musnad of Imam Ahmad, Musnad Bazzar and Musnad Abu Ya'la. See: Majma' al-Zawa'id, 10/54)
5. Sayyiduna Amr ibn Abasa (Allah be pleased with him) relates that Uyyayna ibn Hisn al-Fazari once remarked in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) that the best of men arethe people of Najd. The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) replied: "You have lied! Rather, the best of men are the people of Yemen. Belief/faith (iman) is Yemeni and I am also a Yemeni." (Tabrani and Ahmad, with all the narrators in the chain authentic (thiqat). See: Majma' al-Zawa'id, 10/44)
6. In another narration, the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) is reported to have said: "Faith is of the Yemenis, and they (the people of Yemen) are from me and their direction is towards me, even if they are far from me in distance. It will be very soon that they come to you as helpers (ansar); hence I command you to be good with them." (Tabrani with a sound [Hasan] chain. See: Majma' al-Zawa'id, 10/55)

When we see the Dua Rasul Allah (saws) made on multiple occasions, and only some of which we have mentioned, He (saws) said Iman and hence Aqeedah are a Yemeni, referring to the Aqeedah of Imam Ash'ari that the Ummah would come to adopt, "Faith (Iman and Aqeedah) is of the Yemenis, and they (the people of Yemen) are from me and their direction is towards me (referring to their future), it is the only Aqeedah to receive such a dua and blessing. Allah speaks about the future generations of the Ashari's in the Quran and number of narration's, "al-Qushayri said that they bore not only the external meaning of the tribe of the Companion Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, but also the additional meaning of the followers of his descendent Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, meaning the Ash'ari school". Among these narrations:

"O you who believe! Whoever among you turns back from his Religion, know that in his stead Allah will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble toward believers, stern toward disbelievers, striving in the way of Allah, and fearing not the blame of any blamer. Such is the grace of Allah which He gives to whom He will. Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing." (5:54)

When Allah revealed this verse, the Prophet pointed to Abu Musa al-Ash'ari and said: "They are that man's People." [Narrated from `Iyad by Ibn Abi Shayba and al-Hakim who said it is saheeh by Imam Muslim's criterion, and by Imam al-Tabarani with a sound chain as stated by al-Haythami.]

The Prophet (saws) said, 'They are people like him', and he pointed to Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, as reported by al-Hakim [al-Naysaburi] in his Sahih... That, description mentioned, is God's bounty; He gives it to whom He will; and God is Embracing, of abundant bounty, Knowing, of those who deserve it. (Imam Suyuti in Tafsir al Jalalayn, 5:54)

"after the death of Muhammad (pbuh) (Allah will bring a people) i.e. the people of Yemen (whom He loveth and who love Him, humble) compassionate and benevolent (towards believers, stern towards) hard on (disbelievers, striving in the way of Allah) attached to Allah's obedience (and fearing not the blame of any blamer. Such) that which I have mentioned of love, command, etc. (is the grace of Allah which He giveth unto whom He will) He gives to whoever is fit for it. (Allah is All-Embracing) Allah is Generous in His gift, (All-Knowing) to whom He gives." (Tanwir al Miqbas min Tafsir Ibn Abbas, 5:54)

Imam Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri said: "Therefore, the followers of Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari are also among his (Abu Musa's) People. For in every place that a people are affiliated to a Prophet, what is meant is the followers of that Prophet." (Tafsir al-Qurtubi verse 5:54)

This is also the position of Imam Ibn Asakir, Imam al-Bayhaqi and Imam al-Subki. (Tabyin Kadhīb al-Muftari and Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyya al-Kubra (3:362-363))

The Prophet (saws) said "'Tomorrow shall come to you a people more sensitive in their hearts towards Islam than you.' Then the Ash'aris came, among them Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. As they approached Madina they sang poetry, saying: 'Tomorrow we meet our beloved ones, Muhammad and his group!' When they arrived they began to shake hands with the people, and they were the first to innovate hand-shaking." (Ahmad, Sahih)

The Prophet (saws) said "The people of Yemen have come to you, most sensitive in their souls, softest of hearts! Belief is from Yemen, wisdom is from Yemen! Pride and arrogance are found among the camel-owners; tranquility and dignity among the sheep-owners." (Bukhari and Muslim)

"I went in to see the Prophet after tying my camel at the gate. People from the Banu Tamim came in to see him. He said: 'Accept the glad tidings, O Banu Tamim!' They said: 'You gave us glad tidings; now give us something tangible.' This exchange took place twice. Then some from the people of Yemen came in to see him. He said: 'Accept the glad tidings, O people of Yemen! for the Banu Tamim did not accept them.' They said: 'We accept, O Messenger of Allah!' Then they said: 'We came to ask you of this Great Matter.' He said: 'Allah was when nothing was other than Him. His Throne stood over the water. He wrote all things in the Remembrance. He created the heavens and the earth.'...Then someone (suddenly) called out: 'Your camel has fled, O Ibn al-Husayn!' I darted out and between me and my camel I could see a mirage. By Allah! How I wish that I had left it alone." (Bukhari)

Al-Subki said: "Our scholars have said that the Prophet did not speak to anyone of the foundations of the Religion (usul al-Deen) in such a way as he has spoken to the Ash'aris in this hadith." (Al-Subki, Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyya al-Kubra (3:364))

The Prophet (saws) said, "They (the Asharis) are part of me and I am part of them." (Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (saws) said, "The Asharis among people are like a precious parcel containing musk." (Hadith of the Prophet narrated from Hasan al-Basri in the mode of mursal (missing the Companion link) by Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri in Ibn Sa'd's Tabaqat.)

Many prominent scholars understood that the Ash`aris mentioned in the hadith included specific reference to the Ash`ari scholars who would come latter on, they included Imam Abu al-Qasim, Imam al-Qushayri, Imam al-Subki, and Imam Ibn `Asakir.

The Scholars that Allah sent as he promised in verse 5:54 where among is lam's greatest, they included, Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad ibn Hajar 'Asqalani, Imam Nawawi, Imam Qurtubi, Shaykh al-Islam ibn Hajar Haytami, Imam Abu Bakr Baqillani, Imam Asqalani; Imam Nasafi, Imam Shirbini and The proof of Islam (hujatul Islam) Imam al Ghazali, some were considered the mujadid of their era.

The Maturidis

Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, the "Imam of the Theologians;" was the eponymous founder of the other major Sunni school of theology. He was born in Maturid, a district of Samarqand, in present-day Uzbekistan. Aside from being one of the imams of the fundamentals of din (religion), he was a prominent jurist of the Hanafi school, having studied under Nusayr ibn Yahya al-Balkhi, and was the author of numerous works in fiqh, usul, tafsir, and kalam (Al-Fawa'id al-Bahiyya 195). He passed away in 333/944. Abu Zahra (d. 1396/1976) says in his Al-Madhahib al-Islamiyya, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and Abu 'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari were contemporaries, and both were striving in the same cause. The difference was that Imam Ash'ari was geographically closer to the camps of the opponent [the Mu'tazila]. Basra (in Iraq) had been the birthplace of the Mu'tazili ideology and the place from where it grew and spread, and it was also one of the main fronts in the ideological war between the Mu'tazila and the scholars of Hadith and jurisprudence (fiqh). Though Abu Mansur al-Maturidi was far from this battlefield, its echoes had reached the lands where he lived, and hence, there were Mu'tazila in Transoxiana mimicking the Mu'tazila of Iraq. It was Maturidi who stood up to combat them.""

What we learn from the biographies of the two Imams is that their goal was one: to defend the orthodox beliefs of the Ahl al-Sunna wa 'l-Jama'a against the onslaught of innovators, especially the Mutazila. Though their objectives were the same, certain elements of their methodologies inevitably diverged, commensurate with the unique circumstances of each Imam's locality. Some scholars sum up their differences as follows: Imam Ashari did not give much preference to reason in the presence of sacred texts,' even if they were transmitted by lone narrators (khabar abad) rather than through uninterrupted

transmission (tawatur), 'while Imam Maturidi would attempt to reconcile between reason and the transmitted text (manqul), as long as it was possible to do so without too much difficulty or without sacrificing fairness. This slight difference in methodology did not produce any substantial discrepancy in their theological precepts, but indeed served only to make the existing theological discourse all the richer. The differences were on ancillary matters that had no bearing on agreed-upon fundamentals, and most could be reduced to mere differences in phraseology. These two schools are thus both classified as orthodox schools of Islamic theology and of the Ahl al-Sunna wa 'l-Jama'a, with the Maturidis coming under the general heading of "Asharis" when contrasted with the Mutazila, Khawarij, and other innovators.'

It should be interesting to note that most of the followers of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence have historically been followers of the Maturidi school of theology. However, one third of them, along with three-quarters of the Shafiis, all of the Malikis, and some Hanbalis, adhere to the Ashari school. A few Hanafis, Hanbalis, and Shafiis subscribed to the Mutazili school, and aside from another group of Hanbalis, who remained on the school of the predecessors (salaf) in the practice of tafwir (consigning the knowledge of the details of ambiguous [mutashabihat] sacred texts to Allah), many others adopted the Hashawiyya ideology (Muqaddimat al-Imam al-Kawthari 48).



SECTION 3

Al Fiqh al Akbar

KNOWLEDGE

- Ibn ‘Abbas reported, that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wa-sallam) advised a group of his companions: “When you pass by the meadows of Paradise indulge freely in it!” They said: “O Messenger of Allah! What are the meadows of Paradise?” He said: “The circles of ‘Ilm (knowledge)” (At-Tabarani)
- Abu Huraira related that Allah's Apostle said, "I have been sent with the shortest expressions bearing the widest meanings, and I have been made victorious with ru'b (cast in the hearts of the enemy), and while I was sleeping, the keys of the treasures of the world were brought to me and put in my hand." Abu Huraira added: Allah's Apostle has left the world and now you, people, are bringing out those treasures. (Bukhari)

The Structure and Method of Al Fiah al Akbar

Al-Fiqh al-Akbar is a clear and concise text. It is not too difficult for a person with sufficient command of Arabic and an elementary understanding of the Islamic creed to understand. The work begins by mentioning the foundational articles of faith, and goes on to discuss the eternal essence (dhat) of Allah Most High, His names and attributes, and the Qur'an as His eternal speech. Thereafter, it elaborates on how one acquires true faith (iman) or enters into a state of unbelief (kufr) after coming into this world.

The subject of prophets and messengers is also taken up in some detail, followed by a discussion on the four rightly-guided caliphs and other Companions, and what the attitude of believers should be toward them.

In refuting the Mutazila, Khawarij, and others, the text proves that the believer does not leave Islam by committing sins. A discussion of the miracles bestowed by Allah Most High on His various servants is presented, followed by an in-depth analysis of iman (true faith) and islam (submission) and the extent to which a person's faith increases and decreases. Other issues raised in the text include the generosity and justice of Allah in dealing with His servants; eschatological issues, such as the questioning in the grave; the Ascension (miraj) of the Messenger as well as Gog and Magog and other awaited signs of the Last Day.

Although the Imam follows a particular order in the text, he sometimes repeats certain points already mentioned for emphasis; for instance, because of the Qur'an's weighty importance, he asserts several times that the eternal speech of Allah is unlike the created words of human beings. [Pg.31]

Imam Abu Hanifa in Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar makes statements about the hand, face, and self and them being attributes, we must consider two things in particular:

1 – Imam At-Tahaawi makes no mention of hands, a face, or a self in his ‘aqeedah. And his book has been accepted as the one that represents the ‘aqeedah of Imam Abu Hanifa and his two companions, Abu Yusuf and Muhammad Ash-Shaibaani.

2 – Secondly, we must understand any comment made in Al-Fiqh al-Akbar – as in other works - according to its context in History.

According to Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, Allah has two general classifications of attributes known as ‘Attributes of the Essence’ and ‘Attributes of Action.’

Attributes of the Essence are the essential qualities of His being.

As for attributes of action, they are things that happen outside of His being. And since He is the one responsible for those occurrences, they are attributed to Him and called ‘Attributes of Action.’

Imam Abu Hanifa explains this in his book when he says:

“He doesn’t resemble anything of His creation, and nothing of His creation resembles Him. He has always and will always exist with His names and His attributes of the (divine) essence and those (attributes) of action.

As for those of the essence, they are: life, power, knowledge, speech, hearing, seeing, and will.

And as for those of action, they are: creating, providing, producing, originating, manufacturing, and other attributes of action.”

So the attributes of Allah's divine essence are seven:

1. Life
2. Power
3. Knowledge
4. Speech
5. Hearing
6. Seeing
7. Will

As for the attributes of action, he states things like:

1. Creating,
2. Providing,
3. Producing,
4. Originating,
5. Manufacturing,
6. And other attributes of action

Then, Imam Abu Hanifa says,

“He has always and will always exist with His names and attributes. He has not acquired any new name or attribute.”

So according to Imam Abu Hanifa, Allah has 7 confirmed attributes of the essence [2.], while he places no limit to His attributes of action, since the possibilities of what can exist are limitless.

As for restricting the attributes of the essence to merely seven, this is not to say that these are the only attributes that Allah has. It is merely to say that this is the number that both revelation and reason have been able to conclude. As for the standard view of Maaturidis, the attributes of the essence are 8.

As for Ash'aris, they divide attributes a bit further to the point that some of them have stated 13 [3.] and some have stated 20 [4.].

In the end, most of that is just a difference in semantics. And the true difference is with relationship to what Ash'aris call 'Abstract Attributes', which are the 7 that Abu Hanifa mentions in Al-Fiqh Al-Akbar, while Maaturidis add an eighth called 'Takween.'

At any rate, Imam Abu Hanifa doesn't make mention of the hand, face, and self until he enumerates the attributes of the essence. So if Allah hasn't acquired any new name or attribute, there are truly no other definitive attributes of essence other than those mentioned above[5], and the hand, face, and self aren't included among them.

So what are we to understand from all of this? How do we reconcile between Abu Hanifa's saying after mentioning the seven attributes of the essence:

"He has always and will always exist with His names and attributes. He has not acquired any new name or attribute."

And between his saying,

"He has a hand, a face, and a self. So what He, High is He, mentions in the Qur'an of the mention of the face, hand, and self, are all attributes of His with no modality (or description)."?

The 'hand, face, and self' are references to either one of Allah's true attributes of the essence as stated in the first clause by Imam Abu Hanifa, Or they are references to one of His attributes of action.[9]

One cannot deny that by such words being annexed to Allah's name or pronoun in the Qur'an, they are being 'attributed' to Him directly even if calling them 'attributes' doesn't coincide with the original linguistic definition of what an attribute is.

So calling them attributes would be a metaphorical application as opposed to a literal application. And if it is a metaphorical application, it would have to be accepted that such named 'attributes' are metaphorical 'attributes.' So the hand, face, and self

would have to be a metaphorical 'hand, face, and self,' which are references to one of Allah's true attributes, since there is nothing like unto Him. And 'hand' in its original linguistic understanding applies only to created beings.

Abdur-Rahman ibn Al-Jawzi says while mentioning the mistakes of some Hanbali scholars in the area of scriptural interpretation of the problematic verses of the Qur'an,

"And those writers who I have mentioned have erred in seven areas. The first of them is that they called the 'reports' 'attributes.' When they are merely annexations/possessive forms. And not every possessive form is an attribute. For Allah, High is He, has said: ((And I have blown into him from My spirit)) [Al-Hijr: 29]. And Allah doesn't have an attribute known as a 'spirit.' So those who have called 'the possessive form' (idaafa) 'an attribute' are guilty of innovation."

The linguist, Tha'lab says in Taaj al-'Aroos, "A 'na't' is a description given to a specific part of the body like the word 'lame' ('araj). A 'sifa' (attribute) is for non-specificity ('umoom), like the word 'magnificent' ('azeem) and 'generous' (kareem). So Allah is described with a 'sifa'. But He is not described with a 'na't.'"

What this would mean is that the word 'sifa' (attribute) is being used metaphorically to mean 'na't', which is another word for 'attribute' or 'trait.' The difference is that a 'na't' describes a specific part of a body, like 'lame' or 'blind'.

For this reason, Imam Bukhaari uses the word 'nu'oot' (plural of na't), instead of 'sifaat' (plural of sifa) to refer to those reports that make mention of Allah's anger, laughter, foot, hand, and face even though He isn't a body and doesn't have a body.

This would have to be the accepted interpretation. Otherwise, we must accept that Imam Abu Hanifa contradicts his self by first limiting the attributes of the essence to the 7 mentioned above, and then later adding Allah's face, hand, and self.

Another important question is 'Why doesn't Imam Abu Hanifa add to what he considered attributes 'the shin, the side, the eyes, the foot, and the spirit?'

This is important because Allah annexes His name or personal pronoun to each of these things in the Qur'an or the Messenger does so in the hadith. So if I am to accept that Allah has a face, self, and hand, simply because He annexes such things to His name or pronoun, I should also accept that He has eyes, a spirit, a foot, a side, a shin, a she-camel, a house, and any other thing that He has attached His name or pronoun to.

And if the Salafis agree with Abu Hanifa's creed, they should only accept as attributes those things that Abu Hanifa declared to be attributes. This would mean that Salafis have to stop saying that Allah has a foot, a shin, a side, and eyes.

If they use Abu Hanifa's words about the face, hand, and self as being proof that they follow the minhaaj and understanding of the Salaf, they should only say what the Salaf said and stop adding to their words.

As for referring to these problematic verses and hadiths as 'Attribute Verses' (Aayaat as-Sifaat) or 'Reports of Attributes' (Akhbaar as-Sifaat), this was the specific terminology that scholars used to refer to them even though they didn't actually mean that such ascriptions mentioned in scripture were attributes of Allah. Imam Ibn Al-Jawzi's words above clarify the error of this sort of designation. So hopefully that should resolve any confusion about the issue.

AL FIQH AL AKBAR BY IMAM ABU HANIFA

Translated by Shaykh Abdur Rahman Ibn Yusuf and taken from his work Al Fiqh al Akbar Explained

The Fundamentals of Divine oneness and True Faith

[This treatise is on] the fundamentals of divine oneness and [tenets] upon which it is correct to base [one's] belief It is obligatory [for a person] to state: I believe in Allah, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, resurrection after death, that destiny, good and evil, is from Allah Most High, the Reckoning, the Scale, Paradise, and Hellfire; and that they are all true.

ALLAH AND HIS ESSENTIAL AND ACTIVE ATTRIBUTES

Allah Most High is One, not in terms of the number, but in that he has no partner. He neither begets nor is He begotten, and there is none coequal or comparable unto Him. He is not like unto anything from among His creation and nothing from among His creation is like unto Him.

He was, is, and will forever be possessor of His names and of His essential and active attributes. As for His essential [attributes], they are life, power, knowledge, speech, hearing, seeing, and willing. And as for His active [attributes], they are

creating, sustaining, bringing into being, originating, making, and others. He was and is ever possessed of His names and attributes; no name or attribute originated later for Him.

He has forever been the All-knowing with His knowledge, and knowledge was an attribute in preeternity; the All-powerful with His power, and power was an attribute in preeternity; the Speaker with His speech, and speech was an attribute in preeternity; the Creator with His creating, and creating was an attribute in preeternity; and the Doer with his doing, and doing was an attribute in preeternity.

The Doer is Allah Most High, while doing was an attribute in preeternity. That which is done [i.e., product of His doing] is created, while His doing is uncreated. His attributes in preeternity are neither originated nor created [by another]' Whoever says that they are created or originated, or wavers or is doubtful, is an unbeliever in Allah Most High.

THE QUR'AN: THE SPEECH OF ALLAH MOST HIGH

The Qur'an is the speech of Allah Most High: written in texts, memorized by hearts, recited by tongues, and revealed upon the Prophet (upon him be blessings and peace). Our uttering of the Qur'an is created, our writing of it is created, and our reciting it is created, but the Qur'an is uncreated.

Whatever Allah Most High has said in the Qur'an in quoting Musa (Moses) and other prophets (upon them be peace), and Pharaoh and Iblis (Satan), is all the speech of Allah Most High informing [us about them. The speech of Allah Most High is uncreated, while the speech of Musa and that of other created beings is created. The Qur'an is the speech of Allah Most High-therefore preeternally existent-unlike their speech.

Musa heard the speech of Allah Most High, as is [mentioned] in the words of Allah: "And Allah spoke directly unto Musa" [(Qur'an 4:164)]. Allah Most High was the Speaker when He had not yet spoken to Musa. Allah Most High was the Creator in preeternity when He had not yet created creation. So when Allah spoke to Musa, He spoke to him with His speech, which was His attribute in preeternity.

Every attribute of His is unlike the attributes of creation. He knows unlike the way we know. He is powerful unlike the way we are powerful. He sees unlike the way we see. He speaks unlike the way we speak. He hears unlike the way we hear. We

speak [and communicate] by means of organs and letters, while Allah Most High speaks without any organs or letters. Letters are created and the speech of Allah Most High is uncreated.

ALLAH IS UNLIKE ANYTHING, AND HIS HAND, COUNTENANCE, AND SELF

Allah is an entity (shay') unlike any other entity. The meaning of [Allah being a] shay' [unlike any other] is that He is without body, substance, or accident. He has no definition, no opposite, no equal, and no peer. He possesses a hand, a countenance, and a self, as He has mentioned in the Qur'an.

What Allah Most High has mentioned in the Qur'an-His countenance, hand, and self-they are His attributes without description. It should not be stated that His hand is His power or blessing, because saying that would be invalidating the attribute, which is the view of the Qadariyya and the Mutazila. His hand is His attribute without description, and His anger and pleasure are from among His attributes without description.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF CREATING, KNOWLEDGE, PREDESTINATION, AND HIS WRITING IN THE PRESERVED TABLET

Allah Most High created all things from no thing. Allah Most High knew in preeternity all things prior to their being. It was He who apportioned all things and ordained them. There is in this world nothing, nor in the next, except through His will, knowledge, ordination, decree, and in accordance with His writing it in the Preserved Tablet. Yet His writing entails descriptions, not commands.

Ordaining, decreeing, and willing are His attributes in preeternity without description. Allah knows that the nonexistent is nonexistent in the state of its nonexistence, and He knows how it will be when He brings it into existence.

And Allah knows that the existent is existent while it is in a state of existence, and He knows how it will perish. Allah knows that somebody standing is standing while he is standing; then when he sits, He knows that he is sitting while he is sitting,

without there being any alteration or origination in His knowledge. Alterations and differences only occur in the knowledge of created beings.

ALLAH CREATED PEOPLE PURE AND THE COVENANT OF THE BEGINNING

Allah Most High created all created beings free from unbelief and true faith. He then addressed them, commanded them, and prohibited them [from certain acts]. Thereafter, whoever disbelieved did so through his own doing by rejecting and repudiating the truth, Allah having forsaken him; and whoever believed did so through his own choosing by affirming [the truth] and being convinced [of it], Allah having granted him divine guidance and assistance.

Allah extracted the progeny of Adam from his loins and endowed them with intelligence. He then addressed them, commanding them to believe and prohibiting them from unbelief. They affirmed His lordship, and that was faith on their part. Thus, they are born on this natural faith. Thereafter, whoever disbelieves has indeed replaced and altered [his natural faith], and whoever believes and affirms has indeed remained steadfast on it and persevered.

Allah does not compel anyone to unbelief or true faith. He does not create people believers or unbelievers, but creates them as [pure] individuals; to believe or disbelieve is the action of the servants.

Allah Most High knows one who disbelieves as an unbeliever while in the state of unbelief. Thereafter, if the person believes, Allah knows him as a believer, while in the state of belief and loves him, without His knowledge or attribute [of love] undergoing any change.

THE CREATOR AND THE ACTIONS OF HIS CREATION

All actions of servants pertaining to their motion and stillness are in reality their acquisition, while Allah Most High is their Creator. They are all through His will, knowledge, ordainment, and decree. All acts of obedience are obligatory through the command of Allah, His love, approval, knowledge, will, ordainment, and decree; and all acts of disobedience are through His knowledge, ordainment, decree, and will, but not through His love, approval, or command.

THE PROPHETS (UPON THEM BE PEACE), MUHAMMAD AND THE COMPANIONS

The prophets (upon them be blessings and peace) are all free from minor sins, enormities, unbelief, and wicked acts. However, some slips and mistakes have escaped them.

Muhammad (saws) is Allah's beloved, His servant, His Messenger, His Prophet, His chosen one, and His purified one. Never did he worship idols or partner anything with Allah even for a blink of an eye, nor did he ever commit a minor sin or enormity.

The most noble person after the prophets (upon them be blessings and peace) is Abu Bakr, the Most Truthful, then 'Umar ibn al-Khatab, the Differentiator, then 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, Possessor of Two Lights, and then 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Chosen One (may the pleasure of Allah be with them all).

They were [devout] worshippers and steadfast on the truth and with the Truth. We love them all and do not mention any Companion of the Messenger of Allah (saws) except only by way of praise.

THE EFFECTS OF SIN ON A PERSON, WIPING LEATHER SOCKS, TARAWIH AND OTHER MATTERS

We do not charge any believer with unbelief for any sin he commits, even if it is an enormity, as long as he does not regard it as lawful. We do not remove the title of true faith from him, and we call him a real believer. It is possible that the person be an unrighteous believer, without being an unbeliever.

Wiping over leather socks is a sunna. Tarawih prayer during the nights of the month of Ramadan is a sunnah. Prayer is permissible behind any righteous or unrighteous believer.

We do not claim that a believer is unharmed by sin or that he will not enter Hellfire. Nor do we claim that he will remain in the fire of Hell forever, even if he is unrighteous, after leaving the world a believer. We do not claim that our good deeds are [surely] accepted and bad deeds [surely] forgiven, as the Murji'a do. But we state that whoever performs a good deed in

conformity with all its conditions and free from corruptive defects, and does not invalidate it by unbelief, apostasy, or bad character until he leaves the world a believer, then Allah Most High will not disregard the deed, but will accept it from him and reward him for it.

For any sin lesser than partnering others with Allah or unbelief altogether, in which the perpetrator did not repent, but died a believer, he will be within the will of Allah Most High-If Allah wills, He will punish him with the Fire, and if He wills, He will forgive him and not punish him with the Fire at all.

If ostentation becomes part of any action, it eliminates its reward; similar is vanity.

MU'JIZAT, KARAMAT, AND ISTIDRAJ

Signs of the prophets are real, and miracles of divine favor are true of the friends of Allah. As for whatever is performed by the enemies of Allah, such as Iblis (Satan), Pharaoh, and the Antichrist-some of which, it is narrated, has already occurred and others of which are yet to occur-we do not call them established signs or miracles of divine favor, but will call them the fulfillment of their needs. This is because Allah Most High fulfils the needs of His enemies to delude and punish them. Hence, they are deluded and they increase in their tyranny and unbelief. This is all conceivable and possible.

Allah Most High was the Creator before He created and the Sustainer before He gave sustenance.

THE BEATIFIC VISION OF ALLAH

Allah Most High will be seen in the Hereafter. The believers will see Him, while in Paradise, with their own eyes, without any comparison or modality. There will not be any distance between Him and His creation.

IMAN, ISLAM AND DIN

Iman means to affirm and be convinced. The faith of the inhabitants of the heavens and earth neither increases nor decreases in terms of the articles of faith; it increases and decreases in certainty and conviction. Believers are equal in faith and divine oneness, dissimilar in actions.

Islam is to surrender and to submit to the commands of Allah Most High. Hence, there is a literal difference between iman and islam. However, iman (faith) does not exist without islam nor islam without iman: they are as the back with the stomach. Din (religion) is a noun that encompasses iman, islam, and all sacred laws.

KNOWING ALLAH MOST HIGH

We know Allah Most High as much as is His right to be known, as He has described His essence in His Book with all of His attributes. Nobody is able to worship Allah Most High as much as is His right to be worshipped, to the extent He is worthy. However, a person worships Him at His command as He has commanded through His Book and the Sunna of His Messenger.

All believers are equal in knowledge, certainty, trust, love, satisfaction, fear, hope, and belief therein. However, they are dissimilar in everything other than in the belief in them all.

ALLAH THE GENEROUS AND JUST

Allah Most High is kind and just to His servants: He may give many times more reward to a servant than he is entitled to out of His kindness, He may punish for a sin out of His justice, and He may forgive out of His generosity.

INTERCESSION AND SOME OTHER ESCHATOLOGICAL REALITIES

Intercession by the prophets (upon them be peace) is a reality; and intercession by the Prophet for sinful believers and for believers guilty of enormities who deserve to be punished is an established reality. The weighing of deeds on the Scale on the Day of Judgment is a reality. The Watering Pool of the Prophet (saws) is a reality. Settling of accounts with good deeds between litigants on the Day of Judgment is a reality; if they do not possess good deeds, then bad deeds being cast on them is true and possible. Paradise and Hellfire have already been created and will never cease to exist, the wide-eyed maidens will never die, and the punishment and reward of Allah will never end.

ALLAH GUIDES AND LEAVES ASTRAY

Allah Most High guides aright whom He wills, out of His generosity; and leaves to stray whom He wills, with justice. His leaving a person to stray is His forsaking him, and the explanation of khidhlan (forsaking) is that He not grant a servant divine guidance toward what pleases Him: this is justice on His part. Likewise is [His] punishing the forsaken for disobedience.

It is not permissible for us to state that Satan takes away faith from a faithful servant by force or compulsion. We state instead that the servant abandons his faith, and then Satan takes it away from him.

ESCHATOLOGICAL REALITIES OF THE GRAVE

Questioning by Munkar and Nakir is a reality and occurs in the grave. The returning of the soul to the body in one's grave is a reality. The constricting of the grave and punishment therein is a reality befalling all unbelievers, and a reality and possibility in the case of some disobedient believers.

EXPRESSING THE ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAH IN OTHER THAN ARABIC

It is permissible to express all the attributes of Allah Most High that the scholars have expressed in Persian, with the exception of hand in Persian. It is permissible to say ru'e khuda (the Countenance of God) Most Mighty and Majestic without any comparison or modality.

THE CLOSENESS AND DISTANCE OF A PERSON TO ALLAH MOST HIGH

The closeness and distance of Allah is not in terms of long and short distances; rather, it is in terms of honor and humiliation. The obedient is close to Him without description, and the disobedient is far from Him without description. Closeness, distance, and turning toward are applied to a servant who converses intimately with Allah. Likewise without modality are the servant's closeness to Allah in Paradise and his standing before Him.

MORE CONCERNING THE QUR'AN

The Qur'an has been revealed upon the Messenger of Allah (saws) and written in texts. The verses of the Qur'an, in that they are the speech of Allah Most High, are all equal in virtue and exaltedness, except that some possess [both] the virtue of [their] mention along with the virtue of what is mentioned [in them, i.e, their subject matter], such as the Throne Verse, which deals with the exaltedness, sublimity, and attributes of Allah Most High; therefore, the two virtues are combined in it that of being mentioned and that of its content. Some verses possess only virtue of being mentioned, such as the stories of the unbelievers, which have no virtue in their content (namely the unbelievers). Similarly, the names and attributes [of Allah Most High] are all equal in exaltedness and virtue, without any difference between them.

ABU TALIB, THE PARENTS OF ALLAH'S MESSENGER AND HIS CHILDREN

[The Prophet's uncle and 'Ali's father, Abu Talib, died an unbeliever.] Qasim, Tahir, and Ibrahim were the sons of the Messenger of Allah (saws), and Farima, Ruqayya, Zaynab, and Umm Kulthum were all his daughters.

WHEN DOUBT ARISES ABOUT ANY OF THE SUBTLETIES OF TAWHID

Whenever any issue from the subtleties of the science of divine oneness pose problems for a person, it is obligatory that he believe immediately whatever is correct according to Allah, until he finds a learned person and inquires from him. It is not permissible for him to delay in his inquiry, and he will not be excused for abstaining from it. He will be committing unbelief, if he hesitates.

CONCERNING THE ASCENSION AND SOME SIGNS OF THE LAST DAY

The report regarding the Ascension is a reality. Whoever rejects it is a misguided innovator. The emergence of the Antichrist, Gog and Magog, the rising of the sun from its place of setting, the descent of Isa (saws) from the heaven, and all the signs of the Day of Judgment according to what has been related in the authentic narrations, are a reality and destined to occur. Allah Most High guides whom He wills to the straight path.

Footnotes

[2]. These seven attributes are referred to by Ash'aris as 'The Abstract Attributes' (Sifaat al-Ma'aani).

[3]. In addition to the seven aforementioned attributes, Ash'aris include the following six:

1. Existence
2. Permanence without beginning
3. Endurance without end
4. Absoluteness independence
5. Dissimilarity to Created Things
6. Oneness

Existence is known as the 'Essential Attribute' (As-sifah An-nafsiyyah), since without it Allah would not be able of being described by any of the others.

The other 5 are known as the 'Negating Attributes' (As-Sifaat As-Salbiyyah). This is because by establishing them, one negates their opposites from Allah's being.

[4]. Ash'aris also include seven other attributes called 'Signifying Attributes' (As-Sifaat al-Ma'nawiyyah). They are:

1. That Allah be Powerful
2. That Allah be Willful
3. That Allah be Knowing
4. That Allah be Living
5. That Allah be Seeing

6. That Allah be Hearing

7. That Allah be Speaking

They are called the 'Signifying Attributes' (As-Sifaat al-Ma'nawiyya), because they signify that Allah has the attribute that each adjective implies, i.e. power, will, knowledge, life, sight, hearing, and speech.

Abu Hanifa mentions only the 7 abstract attributes. But this doesn't mean that he denies the existence of the other 13 mentioned by Ash'aris. This is because the 'essential attribute' of 'existence' and the other five negating attributes are characteristics of the 7 essential qualities. So they go without saying.

[5] The reason that Abu Hanifa doesn't mention the 5 'Negating Attributes' (i.e. permanence without beginning, endurance without end, absolute independence, dissimilarity to creation, and oneness), the 'Essential Attribute' (Existence), and the 7 signifying attributes stated above, is that these attributes are actually qualities of Allah's main qualities, which are the 7 Attributes of the Essence or as Ash'aris call them, 'Abstract Attributes.'

[6] The 'creative-will' is a translation of what Maaturidis refer to as 'takhleeq.'

[7] The 'will to act' is a translation for the word, 'fi'l,' usually translated as 'action.' I translated as 'will to act' since it is more in line with the actual creed of Maaturidis who based much of their creed off of the doctrine of Imam Abu Hanifa. To translate 'fi'l' as 'action' or 'act' would imply that the creation – one of Allah's actions - is eternal without a beginning, since the author states that the 'fi'l' is uncreated.

[8] In other words, to say such a thing would be equal to saying what the people who deny the divine decree (qadar) say and like the Mu'tazilites who say that every time Allah ascribes a hand to His self, it means 'power.'

[9] Imam Shaukaani states in his Irshaad al-Fuhool while discussing the different relationships that tie between literal and figurative language that one of them is, "Assigning a thing the name of one of its forms and manifestations, like using the word 'hand' to refer to 'power...' [Irshaad al-Fuhool: 1/119] In other words, the hand is a form or manifestation of power. This would mean that when one says that the 'hand' is one of Allah's attributes, he really means that it is His power even though a different word is used to apply to it. And Allah knows best.

